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ABSTRACT

To understand the limitations and effects of the environment on gifted and rural youth, both delinquent prone and nondelinquent prone, a study was designed to measure 95 gifted sixth graders' perceptions of their environmental support and environmental availability (availability of activities in which students were interested). To investigate the various relationships between degree of giftedness, degree of environmental availability, and degree of environmental support, a three dimensional model was built. Among conclusions were that: students who were perceived as highly gifted and nondelinquent prone perceived much more support than the low gifted and delinquent prone students; as students perceived environmental support, delinquency proneness went down; and leadership giftedness was perceived by two extremes of gifted students, students perceived as highly gifted by peers and teachers or students perceived as low gifted and the more delinquent prone. (SBH)

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Title

RURAL DELINQUENCY PRONENESS: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO GIFTEDNESS, ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AVAILABILITY

The Study was environmentally supported by a grant from the American Association for Gifted Children

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In the midst of the last century, Sir Francis Galton became concerned with brilliance and its limited occurance. Lombroso, a French thinker, believed that if children became precocious at a young age they would become unfit as adults--"early ripe--early rot." Since that time many of us have fairly trembled with the idea of the incredible possibilities inherent in most minds and have been appalled with the infrequency of fruition.

Giftedness has served as a catalyst for the ascent of humanity. Since early time humans have used knowledge to enable them to use the universe as a laboratory in which to test ideas which are helpful for the ascent of humanity and sometimes not helpful in the ascent of humanity. Most of us realize that the growth to full potential is slow and that the nurturance of the gifted is particularly difficult because many times the gifts are hidden or not understood in their early stages.

It has been found that giftedness is not only associated with genetic endowment, but also related to environmental conditions. It is now possible for people to assert their emotional, physical, and intellectual environments for development of their gifts.

The environmental conditions need to be further understood to help nurture the endowed potential.

"IT IS BETTER TO PREVENT CRIMES THAN TO PUNISH THEM."
(Cesare Beccaria, 1765)

Delinquency is a significant problem in our country and is increasing in frequency and location. Much of the literature on delinquency indicates that a delinquent evolves as a result of

non use of skills and talents in socially acceptable ways because of lack of emotional, intellectual, and/or financial support from parents or other adults important in the child's emotional environment.

There is also a lack of positive opportunity to use skills in the environment. Socially acceptable environmental opportunities would include activities through which a child could discover a need for skills and talent development such as hobbies in science, art, building, reading, music, or dance. The literature suggests that some children with the greatest intellectual endowments can also be the most delinquent. What appears to be happening is that the abilities are frustrated and the potential for delinquency is, to that extend, enhanced: The degree of frustration of talents is directly related to delinquency proneness.

Description of Study

In an attempt to understand the limitations and effects of the environment on gifted rural youth, both delinquent prone and non-delinquent prone, this study was designed to measure gifted youths' perception of their environmental support and environmental availability.

Giftedness--Subject Inclusion

The subjects used in this study were located in four small rural Wisconsin communities of populations less than ten thousand each. They were from families who were employed in factories, university settings, small businesses, and family-owned farms.

The communities were stable small towns with little migration, and one rapidly growing "bedroom community" which did not appear to be a stable community.

The literature indicated that after the age of 12 the frequency of delinquent acts accelerates rapidly. Because of this, the study was completed with sixth grade (12 year) students. However, in this study, it was found that the majority of the identified delinquent prone students already had some negative contact with the police. Sixth grade was chosen also because children in that grade have not yet experienced the intellectual growth slump noted by Bayley, Murchison, Campbell, and Terman.

To be included as a subject in this study, it was required that a student be identified as "gifted" according to one or more of three variables. Those variables were: a) degree of intelligence; measured from scores on the Otis Lennon Mental Ability test and/or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite test. If a student scored at or above the first standard deviation for either measure, that student was considered a subject (116 IQ or above, and 84 %ile in Achievement or above), b) degree of perceived giftedness by peer evaluation. A "Peer Evaluation Form" served as a sociometric device which allowed peers to suggest categorical measures where they thought others excelled. The top 15% who received the most votes in each school became subjects for the study. The "Peer Evaluation Form" consisted of questions pertaining to the areas of creativity, sports, achievement, leadership, and science. c) giftedness as estimated by teachers was determined via the "Teacher

Evaluation Form" (Items were extracted from Gowan "Reservoir Model" 1967). If a student received two or more teacher votes in science, creativity, achievement and/or leadership, the student was included in the study.

Each of the three "Gifted" criteria was given a value of 33%. If a subject had an IQ of 140 and an achievement score at the 99th percentile, that student was 33% gifted on the first criteria. If that student was also perceived as gifted by peers in many of the categories of giftedness, that student received 33% giftedness by peer evaluation. If that student was also perceived as gifted by teacher in many categories, he/she again received 33%. Only one student in the study received 100% giftedness. Most of the delinquent prone subjects were in the study on the basis of their IQ scores and/or achievement scores alone.

Of the total sixth grade population, 9% of the gifted subjects received 75% of the peer evaluation votes. This means that the sixth grade students themselves perceived only 23 students as gifted.

The teachers evaluation found 25% of the sixth grade population as gifted. This means that the teachers perceived 65 of the 95 subjects as gifted. The delinquent prone subjects were not perceived as gifted by peers or teachers except in leadership.

Twenty-five of the Gifted subjects would not have been included in the study if the IQ or Achievement scores hadn't been

used. The IQ and/or Achievement score included 91 of the gifted subjects. Four subjects were included because of their giftedness in sports according to peer votes.

It was apparent that the IQ score was the most reliable tool to locate a gifted student. This was most evident with poor readers and delinquent prone students.

Terman (1937) normalized the occurrance of giftedness within the American society. With his work, it was possible to estimate the frequency of giftedness in a percentage quotient. Below are his National percentages and next to them are the Southwest Wisconsin giftedness percentages.

Academically Talented	115 IQ or above	16% (15 out of 100) - National 31% (82 out of 256) - Rural Wis.
Superior	125 IQ or above	5% (5 out of 100) - National 11% (29 out of 256) - Rural Wis.
Gifted	140 IQ or above	.6% (6 out of 1000) - National 1.6% (4 out of 256) - Rural Wis.
Highly Gifted	160 IQ or above	.007% (7 out of 100,000) - National 0 0 - Rural Wis.

Delinquency Prone - Subject Inclusion

Within the total sixth grade student population a definition of delinquency proneness was established. Delinquency proneness was evaluated by seven questions on the "Peer Evaluation Form"; Who gets into trouble the most, Who disturbs the classroom the most, Who teases on the playground the most, Who spends the most time downtown in your city, Do you know anyone who has ever gotten in trouble with the police, and Who do you think may grow up and get into trouble. The "Teacher Evaluation Form" had two questions

pertaining to delinquency proneness; able child who is the biggest nuisance, and child who gets in trouble the most.

Students were ranked according to total number of delinquency proneness votes they received within their school. Fifty gifted subjects received no delinquency proneness votes, 34 gifted subjects received 1 - 5 votes, and 11 of the gifted subjects received the majority of the delinquent prone votes (they received between 7 and 206 votes).

It was reasoned by consultation with Lillyquist (1980), an author and teacher of crimminology, that the students in each school who received the most delinquency proneness votes and as a group also received 70% of the total delinquency proneness votes were selected as the most delinquency prone students. The group selected included 28 students or 11% of the total sixth grade population. Of the 95 gifted subjects, seven were also classified as delinquent prone.

Sex of Subjects

There were 52 girls and 43 boys in the study. Fifteen of the girls had some delinquency proneness votes (two girls received respectively 13% and 9% of their school's DP votes), and 37 girls received no delinquency proneness votes.

Thirty of the boys received delinquency proneness votes and 13 received no delinquency proneness votes. (One boy received 25% of his school's DP votes.)

Determining Environmental Support and Environmental Availability of Gifted Subjects

In order to determine whether parental support affected the

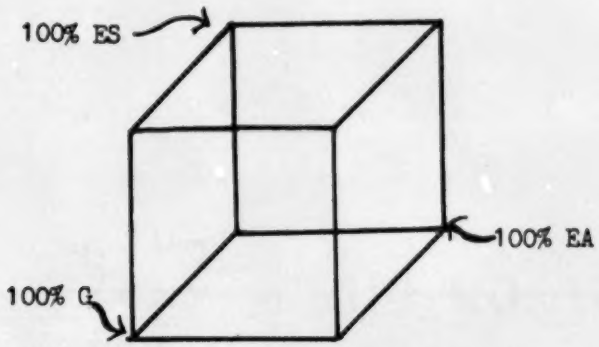
gifted subjects expression of giftedness, the Environmental Support/ Encironmental Availability (ES/EA) form was next administered to the 95 gifted subjects. This measured their perception of parental support (or significant other) and also the subjects perception of what resources were available to them in the community. On the form, there were 97 available activities in the communities such as bike riding, moview, reading, trail bike riding, music lessons, etc. The subjects were instructed to circle those activities which (a) they perceived as available and in which they participated, (b) cross out activities they perceived available but in which the subject could not participate for some reason, and (c) not mark those activities to which they were indifferent.

Environmental Support consisted of the subjects' further responses to activities in which they participated. For each available participated in activity, the subjects indicated the source of support which they perceived; parent (significant other), friends, or brother and sister, and it was registered over the qualities of "who cares," "who helps," and "who's proud." This information was compiled to better understand the subjects perception of what was available and who supported them.

Description of Cubic Model

To investigate the various relationships between degree of Giftedness, degree of Environmental Support, and Environmental Availability, a three dimensional model was built. Each of the three variables (Giftedness, Environmental Support, and Environmental Availability) was translated into a percentage and plotted on a model. (This was done by use of a computer program designed for this study by Dr. James King at the University of Wisconsin-

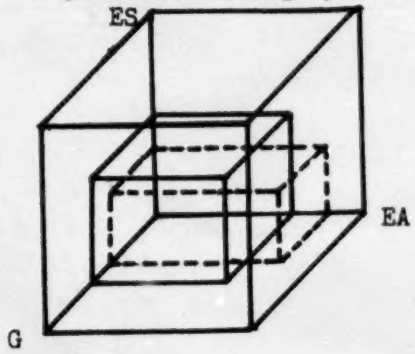
Platteville.) Volume was the product of Giftedness times Environmental Availability times Environmental Support.



Results of the Study

The first hypothesis consisted of producing a three dimensional solid for each subject and correlating its volume with the corresponding subject's degree of DP. The "Fisher Exact Test" was applied because of the low cell density of delinquent prone subjects within the giftedness subjects. Cell density was determined by cut off points agreeing with 15%. The meaning here is that the upper 15% were considered gifted and, therefore, in all selections of extremes, 15% was used.

It was found that the most DP subjects averaged only half the volume compared to the highly Gifted Non-Delinquent prone subjects.



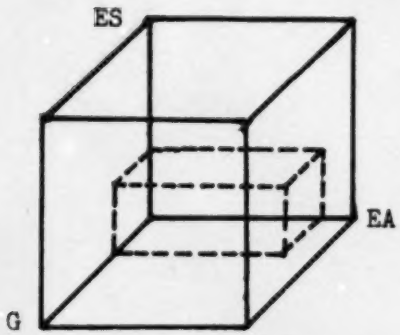
Volume = 199,680

Volume = 95,550

----- Gifted Delinquent

——— Gifted Non-delinquent

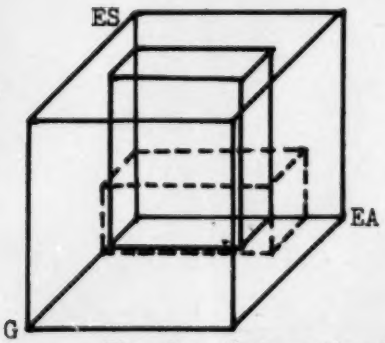
The second hypothesis stated that the dimensional variables will be larger for the delinquent prone subjects than for the non-delinquent prone. When observing the most delinquent prone subjects it was found that their EA dimension was much larger than either their giftedness or their support dimension.



Gifted Delinquent

Environmental Support = 35%
Environmental Availability = 78%
Giftedness = 35%

The third hypothesis stated that environmental support will be inversely related to degree of delinquency proneness. When using the "Fisher Exact Test" on the extremes, it was significant. From this, it was concluded that the relationship existed in the proper direction. As perceived Environmental Support goes up, delinquency proneness goes down.



Gifted Delinquent

Environmental Support = 35%

Gifted Non-delinquent

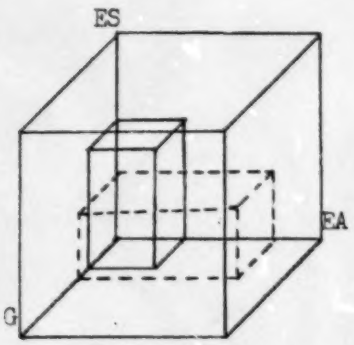
Environmental Support = 82%

The fourth hypothesis was that environmental availability will be directly related with delinquency proneness. When using the "Fisher Exact Test", it was found that highly delinquent prone

subjects perceived significantly higher levels of Environmental Availability than non-delinquents.

The fifth hypothesis was that giftedness will be inversely related to delinquency proneness. The "Fisher Exact Test" showed high giftedness in low delinquency prone subjects.

The sixth hypothesis stated that the dimension, Environmental Support will be inversely related to Environmental Availability. Using the Pearson Product Moment and partialling by sex, this hypothesis was found to be significant. When examining the extremes with "Fisher Exact Test," it was apparent that low Environmental Availability subjects were significantly different from high Environmental Availability subjects in their degree of delinquency proneness. It was found that low Environmental Availability subjects were significantly less delinquent than high Environmental Availability subjects.



Gifted Delinquent
Environmental Availability=78%

Gifted Non-delinquent
Environmental Availability=32%

The last hypothesis stated that the dimension, Environmental Support will be directly related to high giftedness. This was found to be significant when partialled by sex using the Pearson Product Moment.

Discussion

It was found that gifted delinquent prone subjects were not perceived as gifted by teachers or peers even though they had IQ scores ranging from 121 - 137 in this study. There was a group of non-delinquent prone subjects who were also not perceived by peers and teachers as gifted and they were included in the study by their IQ or achievement scores alone. These subjects also perceived low environmental support. The question is, why do some children become delinquent prone and others non-delinquent prone but neither perceives support from home?

There was discrepancy between who the teachers and students perceived as leaders. This would be an interesting area to pursue in later research. Also, many of the leaders were the high IQ gifted and delinquency prone subjects.

The possibility of matching these gifted delinquent prone and gifted non-delinquent prone subjects with a self concept scale may clarify the differences between gifted delinquent prone and gifted non-delinquent prone subjects in their self perception.

Delinquency is present in gifted rural children and is acted out in extreme amounts. The gifted delinquent prone subjects in three out of the four schools received the largest percentage of delinquent prone votes. These gifted delinquent prone subjects were perceived as leaders by peers and/or teachers. They were also friends of the non-gifted but delinquent prone students. The gifted delinquent prone boys were thought to be the funniest by their peers in all four schools, while the two most delinquent prone girls received no votes on this question.

If we give gifted students emotional support through the schools by way of counselors and/or teachers, these students may become able to develop more meaningful goals which will make their lives more purposeful and help decrease delinquency in our communities. Are our schools and communities willing or able to give these students the emotional support which they need?

Another observation from this study was procured by the question, "Who is the most popular with their teachers?" The most gifted and least delinquent prone subjects received the most votes in all four schools.

It appears from this study that the students who perceive support from home are also receiving it at school. The students who need support and are not receiving it at home, are not receiving it at school either.

I would like to close with some words from Fleming(1959).

> "Delinquents and non-delinquents are more alike than teachers have sometimes been tempted to suppose. They share all human longings for appreciation and for chances of participation."

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